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## **Funding Available for Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Conservation**

TEMPLE, TEXAS, June 17, 2010 – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial assistance to landowners to implement conservation practices that will maintain, improve, and restore the longleaf pine ecosystem in east Texas.

Offered through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), NRCS will pay landowners for most of the cost of installing conservation practices to improve the health and extent of the longleaf pine ecosystem.

“Research tells us that the longleaf pine ecosystem is one of the most diverse ecosystems outside the tropics and is in a state of decline in both ecosystem area and health,” said Don Gohmert, NRCS state conservationist for Texas. “With only 3 percent of the original 90 million acres remaining in the longleaf pine ecosystem, it is home to 29 species that are Federally listed as threatened and/or endangered.”

Highest priority will be given to land suitable for tree production in the following counties: Anderson, Angelina, Cherokee, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Liberty, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler and Walker. Land outside these counties that is determined to be suitable for longleaf pine production will also be considered.

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Eligible conservation practices include firebreaks, forest site preparation, forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, and tree/shrub establishment.

Landowners can apply at their local NRCS office in the USDA Service Center. For more information, visit the NRCS Web site at

[www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/whip\\_src/longleaf\\_pine.html](http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/whip_src/longleaf_pine.html)